

Ad Hoc Committee on Best Practices in Northampton Decision Making

Meeting minutes of April 7, 2008

The meeting was called to order at 6 PM by Lisa DePiano in the City Council Chambers.

Present were committee members Jim Palermo, Lisa DePiano, Wendy Foxmyn, Alex Ghiselin, David Narkewicz, Michael Bardsley and Bob Reckman. Citizens present were Jesus Leyva , Bonnie Rose and Andrew Bombard.

The meeting was taped by NCTV for future broadcast.

Members of the committee and the public introduced themselves and answered Lisa's icebreaker question of where we take guests when they visit Northampton.

Lisa reviewed the agenda.

The minutes of our meeting of March 27, 2008 were accepted.

Lisa asked what our resources are. David said that he thought Lyn could make copies for us in small numbers. There was also a discussion about what budget we have. We will probably need money if we are to do significant outreach. The committee agreed that the creator of a document should distribute it electronically, receive comments and modify it if they choose. The modified version should also be circulated electronically if there is time. The creator shall bring copies for the committee members and the public to the meeting. Committee members shall acknowledge receipt if they can. The chairs will continue to prepare the agenda. Wendy will look for another intern or volunteer to help us out.

Wendy reviewed the Ground Rules and Decision-Making Model that she presented at an earlier meeting and has revised. They are based on respect and consensus. The committee agreed to operate under them provisionally. This decision was arrived at by consensus. There was unanimous public input in support of this choice. We were also advised to be patient with this experiment.

Lisa reported on her presentation to the City Council, which went well.

Alex reported from the working group on public forums. Their opinion is that a public forum should be held as soon as possible. It will be held in the Community Room at JFK at 7 PM on Tuesday, May 13. We will invite all members of City Boards and Committees to join us as well as advertising the event to the public in a variety of ways. We will tell people now to save the date. It will be important to figure out a process for the meeting that will encourage frankness. We may be able to have it broadcast live on NCTV. Bob will call NCTV.

Bob reported on his trip to the seminar at Holy Cross today. He talked about several of the speakers. He also told the committee about a book about Citizen Input in Municipal Government. Bob will order a copy.

The committee discussed Bob's memo about Discovery and Outreach. Bob volunteered to do some online research into best practices in other cities and to find the most promising approaches. He will engage Graham's assistance in this. They will make a report to the next committee meeting. Michael and David expressed concern that evaluating some recent city decisions needs to be done carefully. Wendy listed the committees and working groups that she thinks we could establish. Jim will prepare a memo about what directions he thinks we should take. Both documents will be distributed electronically before our next meeting,

Our next meeting will be on Friday, April 18 at 4 PM at a location to be determined by the Chair. David will not be at our next meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 8 PM.

Respectfully submitted;

Bob Reckman